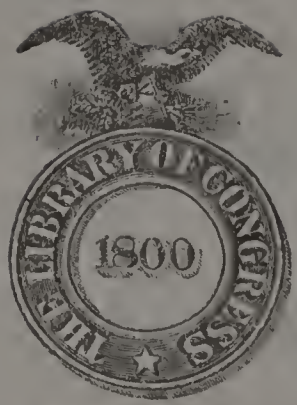
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A HALF CENTURY OF SONNETS

GUSTAV DAVIDSON



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A HALF CENTURY OF SONNETS

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A HALF CENTURY OF SONNETS BY GUSTAV DAVIDSON

" Memorials to one
dead deathless hour."
—Rossetti

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FOR MIRIAM

AND HER DANCING STAR

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A HALF CENTURY OF SONNETS

I. ABSOLUTION

Now I would take me to some quiet place,
For my heart's weary, walking the scarlet town
Early and late; and I would fling me down
Upon the grasses cool, hiding my face
In the brown loam, forgetful of all pain,
Watching the microcosms in the sod
Stirring, without concern of man or God,
And patient as a summer-fall of rain.

They will not taunt me with my gift of rhyme
Nor charge, as men do, that I fruitless go
Dreaming through life; nor that I truant time
Along the causeways or by waterflow;
Nor, when the day is ended, think it crime
That I have only one poor poem to show.

II. SANCTUARY

I have remembrance of a tumult of faces
Pouring past me on the thoroughfare,
And of a city strange with luminous places,
And how I bathed me in the currents there.
Beauty was all too frequent to be rare,
And I forgot the spell of starry spaces
Athirst for glamor in the lamplight glare,
Haunted by shadows and their fugitive graces.

But when I left the broad ways in the gloaming,
Weary with beauty which I could not share,
I turned me to Your sanctuary homing,
And climbed a more resplendent flight of stair;
And from those perilous nights of deep-sea roaming
Found harbour in the haven of Your care.

III. REVALUATION

Whatever dire disasters there are due
My soul, and in what labyrinths betrayed;
However pleasures, with their ormolu
Of splendors and their mantles of brocade
Beguile me to a far forgetfulness
Of all I have put faith in hitherto;
Yet, being conscious of the light no less,
Though in pursuit of passions I must rue,—

I am redeemed: since always it is you
I seek through every fog and wilderness
Of flesh and spirit. Loving you as I do
I mind not how the world my deeds assess:
Weighed in their balances of false and true,
All earthly values are an emptiness.

IV. SOMEWHERE I CHANCED TO READ

Somewhere I chanced to read how love may die
From too large giving; so I mused thereon:
"Haply in this our utmost fear should lie?"
And mindful of this caution, I read on;
Then saw these words: "Yet love may equally
Abate through long neglect." But thereupon
I smiled, believing hereof we were free
And would be ever till our days were done.

Now love is dead, but how I cannot tell—
Whether from too large giving, or neglect.
First dimmed the flame, and after that there fell
The fated silence. Yet I should elect
Neither of these as cause, but say love died
Out of a cold and calculating pride.

V. BEAUTY

Nothing in all the radiant years to be
May come now, Beauty, and usurp your place.
The urge to dreams, the pulse and agony
Of universal trends achieve to grace
Only through you, the pith and mystery
Of all our lives. To think upon your face
Is to renounce known harbours for the sea
And sail beyond the littorals of space.

Children whose eyes contain in them your trail
Are mightier than princes: they have won
Lordship on earth, and such as may not fail.
Yours is the quest that never can be done:
The search for lost Atlantis and the Grail
Beyond the rim of stars and set of sun.

VI. NEW STAR

Each builds the world as he has dreamed it through
Some high philosophy or dark despair;
And having done, each draws the circle there
That shuts him in. Yet ever will ensue,
With sudden vision, revelations new
Till then not shadowed forth or made aware;
So each must cast his world again more fair,
Only to shatter it and build more true!

Thus had I marked the limits of the spheres
Before you came. My heart's close empery
Suffered no comet-stars to throw their spears
Over the verge. I had not learned to see.
But when you burned from out the void of years
I wrote "New Star" in my astronomy.

VII. DEAD PROFOUNDS

I do not know why I should go about
Steeped in the shadows of a long ago
When here is April come without a doubt,
And here are buds importunate to blow.
The moss-pinks and forget-me-nots are out
Together with the hawthorne, white as snow;
And here are jonquils after winter's rout
Victorious with golden overthrow.

But I am wedded to some bygone day
Whose dreads and dearness, silences and sounds,
Make dim for me the trumpets of this May;
And where my heart might break beyond its bounds
To gather in this loveliness, I stray
Further and further into dead profounds.

VIII. MUSING ON CAMELOT AND AVALON

Musing on Camelot and Avalon
I dreamed you stood before me, Guinever,
And I was Launcelot, your heart's most dear.
But when of Arthur, him I thought upon
Who loved us both so well, and how anon
There fell from lips of that most envious peer,
Sir Agrivain, the word we came to fear,—
And how that iron face turned deathly wan:—

Then seemed I to repent me of our sin
The which we gave up earth and heaven for.
We knew no greater joy than love to win—
And love was rooted deep in our heart's core!
But honour fights back to an origin,
And there are gods we cannot long ignore.

IX. TO ONE ENCOUNTERED JULY ELEVENTH

We can but hazard on the fate of souls
Beyond the marches of our earthly sphere;
It may be that our high adventure here
Is preparation for elected goals.
It may be, on that noonday summer-clear
When our life-currents, distant as the poles,
So beautifully crossed amid the shoals,
That destiny ordained our spirits near.

I only know that Chance has been as kind
As though persuasive of our own ideals,
Beating with us bright wings against the bars.
I only know you came; and though my mind
Still walks in unbelief, my spirit kneels,
And I am one with the unfailing stars.

X. UNWEARIED CHASE

There is no beauty that I have not met,
Worshipped or wondered at; no light of grace
Shed from a brow or flowing from a face
That has not drawn impalpably its net
Secure about my heart. My whole life's debt
Is to an eager and unwearied chase
Pursuing loveliness; nor time nor space
May cry a halt, or limitation set.

Yet, from the far horizons and the near
When falls a rain of music, and the air
Vibrates with beauty of you singing there,
I pause, as though the journey's end were here.
As though we two (the world forgot) alone
Could for a thousand futile worlds atone.

XI. COMMANDMENT

You are unlike—unlike that one who came
Imperial and beautiful and proud
Bearing her own light in her own acclaim,
Splendid and rare, as with all gifts endowed;
Nor are you like her, dauntless and unbowed
Under the whips of chance; nor does the same
Vast love of life besiege you in the crowd;
Nor are you as concerned of praise or blame.

Yet have you won commandment o'er my heart
With as assured and perfect an emprise;
For I was captive straightway from the start
Ere yet there came the summons from your eyes.
Now safe in harbour are my errant ships
Held by the glamour of your scented lips.

XII. BEAUTY IS OF YOUR HANDS

Beauty is of your hands: yet have I known
Neither their warmth of clasping nor caress.
Your candid fingers laid upon my own
I have not felt, nor of their tenderness.
I only caught a music in the tone
With which you speak when saying "You" and "Yes,"
(Your mouth a cercis flower, passion-blown)
The while my pulses beat, now more, now less.

But most had I been favored when your eyes
Made luminous the gold-brown of their smile.
Then woke the mystery of old surmise,
And hope came breaking from some distant isle.
But oh, your heart!—the courage in me dies
Probing to that deep centre, mile on mile!

XIII. LIKE SOME NORTHCOAST ADVENTURER OF OLD

Like some northcoast adventurer of old
Upon a tempest-tossed and darkling sea
Guiding his troubled sail as dauntlessly
Through mist, through lashing wave, through dark, through cold,
As though the elements could not withhold
This spirit from its port of destiny
Whither it moves so steadfast and so free,
Fearless of shipwreck, confident and bold,—

Thus do I hail you, Captain, Commodore!
Watching your gallant prow, cutting the deep
And plunging onward to the farther shore.
Within your eyes that will not yield to sleep
There shines a Light, O helmsman at the fore!
And in your heart the ancient grandeurs keep.

XIV. FEMINA

I have no present way of telling how
Your eyes would speak, and with what shade or tone,
If I should take your hand within my own;
Whether its sweet possession you'd allow,
Or claim it back—and I must needs atone!
Whether, for any ill-used word, your brow
Would cloud; or praised, that cheek so placid now
Would flush, with all its roses summer-blown.

And this uncertainty may well remain
When we have no more secrets for confessing—
And on my mouth your silver kisses rain.
Nay, were there no surcease to our caressing,
Knowledge of you I still should strive to gain
Though I had all of you for my possessing!

XV. NEW SPEECH

What unknown language must I seek to learn
To tell of this new seizure of my heart?
What unguessed power of what magic art?
What cryptic sesame to what buried urn?
I must have instruments of new design
Well tempered like the black obsidian;
The vintage of a rare, untasted wine,
And music sweeter than the Lydian.

Known colours cannot sing of never-known birds,
Nor rapture speak in accents heard before.
To stand as emperor before your door
I must devise a language of new words:
For you are beautiful beyond the reach
Of all our art. But I shall learn new speech!

XVI. NOW I REMEMBER GUINEVER THE QUEEN

Now I remember Guinever the queen
And Launcelot whose love was a despair.
Young Tristan's passion for Iseult the Fair,
Elaine the good, and Doette the serene.
But oh, to look into your eyes of green
Is to see Lais langorous in her lair,
Phryne's pale lovers tangled in your hair,
Mad for her mouth while on your lips they lean.

All the perilous beauty I have known
Or glimpsed in volumes of a high romance
Move in your shadow, quicken in your glance,
Plead through your body, languish, and make moan,
And stretch out hands for love of lover lost
On the blue waves of the Aegean tossed.

XVII. INVICTUS

The stars are in collision. A dun night
Walks ghostly through the rain, sword scabbard-drawn.
Somewhere between the darkness and the dawn
Love faints from wounds, a sorry acolyte.
Never a daybreak shall reprove us more.
Proud and love-pitiless, we now are steeled
Against whatever fate may send afield
For the one moment given us to adore.

Thus, with bloody and indifferent hands,
We shall lay out the corpse of our desire,
Asking no God to give us weak commands,
Both masterless, owning our souls entire.
Yet even when we speak our last denial
Love takes revenge, and strangles us the while.

XVIII. DEPARTURE

Summer will go: but you are beautiful.
Autumn will come too soon: but you are young.
The flowers are withering, the birds have sung,
But you are fair, to fair things dutiful.
Go not away: I shall be sorrowful.
The merle is desolate, her heart is wrung.
Go not away: the seed in me has sprung,
And in my heart, a springtide's morrowful.

Nay, you are going and your sails are set;
Going away, and no detaining you!
Parted, as soon as ever we had met—
And what of the precious hopes of gaining you?
Will there be only friendship to regret,
Or now to my breast must I be straining you!

XIX. I SAID WHEN FIRST I SAW YOU

I said, when first I saw you: "She shall be
The quiet undercurrent of my dream;
No one shall know, for I'll the secret deem
Too beautiful for telling; and in me
There'll grow, like early blooms by sounding sea,
A scented glory. Each ennobling thought
Shall bear her image, and the love thus wrought,
Though unconfessed, shall make her bound—yet free."

I said; and with this secret in my heart
I walked content. But you who were so far
Beyond my reach—you came and bid me speak!
That moment broke the magic, flung apart
The golden grains of love, and dimmed that star
Whose splendour nightly hailed I no more seek.

XX. IRON STARS

How have you stirred the colours in my heart
To sudden riot, thrilling me awake
To the new spring's warmth and the green earth's ache!
How, in the quiet, where I stood apart,
Have you divined me, touched me with your fire,
Endowed the silence, wounded me to song,
Till once again the passion-eddies throng
Over the far savannahs of desire.

Now in my heart a silver rain is falling
Like music borne in from an ultimate sea.
Oh you have come, with the old mystery
Of hands that bind, of eyes and red lips calling.
And once again my ancient avatars
Break through the twilight of the iron stars.

XXI. IMPERATRIX

Why have you come if for a moment only
Like dawn inviolate upon a hill?
Long with the need of you have I been lonely;
Now you will go and leave me lonelier still!
Cruel were my lips upon your mouth's keen gladness,
And fearful my soul betrayed in its unrest.
Oh you will go and leave me to my madness,—
And I had dreamed to fail against your breast!

Now is the distance looming dimmer and vaster
Between us, like dead suns in endless space.
Oh I shall run to meet my doom the faster
For all the stars (forgotten in your face)
That went down to imperial disaster,
Consumed in your imperial embrace!

XXII. IN EXILIUM

What shall I do, now I have gone forever
Out of your heart like unremembered rain,
And all the golden paths of my endeavor
Are turned into a wilderness of pain!
Where shall I go, now that I cannot ever
Walk in the April of your pride again.
Surely this Spring will break my heart as never
The granite twilights on the coast of Spain.

Had you been cruel, more cruel than you were tender,
And flung me back to perish in the snows,
I would not then have dreamed towards your surrender,
(Though even the darkness may achieve a rose
And one soul's chaos flame to greater splendor
Than sunsets in the archipelagos).

XXIII. SPRING INTERLUDE

And now that you are gone beyond recalling
And I must walk the solitary ways,
April will find me sparing of its praise,
A laggard even, when the May comes calling.
I fear the hours will seem not so enthralling
On the fawn hills, over the purple bays,
As when you shared with me the dawn of days,
As when you watched with me the shadows falling.

And when June comes, and all the valleys through
The daisies spin their yellow disks again,
My heart will turn away and call it vain!
Not knowing spring or summer without you
To draw the sombre colours from my brain,
Transmuting all the greys to gold and blue.

XXIV. UNLIT ALTARS

I have derived all beauty from denial,
All grace from darkness, wonder from dismay;
And strength has come, with wisdom, from betrayal;
Vision from anguish, grandeur from decay.
The flesh holds empire only for a while;
A dream, however frustrate on its way,
Burns starward through a deathless mile-on-mile.
Only the feasts and satisfactions slay.

So from the white refusal of your lips,
The exile in the gesture of your hands,
Release has come for all my sunken ships
Straining to re-essay the final strands.
So from the unlit altars of your eyes
Is born in me new consequence of skies.

XXV. GOING

It will be vain for spring to come this year
However debonair, when you are going.
I shall not care, though daffodils are blowing
And every rose is fixed upon its spear!
And though with color-pang the earth be glowing,
It will be vain for pink and columbine
To offer me their fragrance or their wine;
Nor will it matter if the streams are flowing.

The night may settle earthward like a flower,
And earth itself go heartbreak into dawn—
I shall not care, remembering an hour
When in our hearts, as o'er a fabulous lawn,
A dryad danced, amid a diamond shower,
And alien to the world we stood withdrawn.

XXVI. APPRAISAL

Shall we two stand defaulting before God
Because our love braved summits of its own
Beyond the law's vouchsafement and the known
Broad highways that a million others trod?
Are we to rue that upward from the sod
Fearless we sprang, as to a blazoned throne,
Fulfilling passions neither could disown,
Swiftly achieving where the others plod?

Paolo and Francesca, sinning so,
Died glorified. Yea, out of such duress
Beauty derives, and all the wonder-glow
Of life. The crowds strive ever in the press
Of common cravings: but they are as though
Gone lost and crying in a wilderness.

XXVII. RECALL

Last night you took me to your heart for keep,
And never was I so well comforted
As when, in your absolving eyes I read
Love as of old, love tender and love deep.
Wide had I sown and wider sought to reap;
Down worldly highways rioted and bled,
Not knowing how my blundering soul was led,—
Nor whither, nor upon what shuddering steep!

Now once more I am gathered to your arms,
Far from the dangers, safe from new assails;
Yet in my ears the call to perilous trails
Will not die out. The world with its alarms
Is still imperious: and I must go
Though love and you, importunate, cry "No!"

XXVIII. RENCONTRE

I felt, when yesterday we met by chance,
That you were destined in this casual way
To give new lease of energy and play
Unto my drooping art. One full, warm glance
From your love-brimming eyes fell like a lance
Upon my soul, pricking it to aspire
As once it had. Now in the reviving fire
I glow again and view the wide expanse.

You came and smote to life each laggard dream,
Each vision of attainment made twice fair,
And hope renewed, with promise of avail.
In your sustaining strength I wage supreme
With the contenders for the upper air,
Knowing that I shall soon o'er all prevail.

XXIX. LONELY, YOU SAID

"Lonely," you said, and whispered low the word
As though it held you captive in its power.
I stood so close, yet still you needs must cower—
So close in the darkened doorway that I heard
Your heart beat, frail as any far-flown bird
Throbbing its ache in some abandoned bower.
And sudden you felt broken, like a flower
The winds have blasted and the snows interred.

Helpless we stood, and dumb. Yet knew we where
To win us kinship in our agony:
Princes and prophets and the world's most rare,
Like us, walked on the earth forsakenly:
Among them One who, being lonely there,
Wept, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

XXX. RESPONSE

In my most quiet need your letter came
Trippingly, like some light-hearted breeze
Sporting its faery form amongst the trees,
Or like an amorous song too sweet to name
Stirring the gentler yearnings in my frame.
Dear letter, and thou dearer thing that wrote
The words therein, each breathing like a note
Of music, putting my own poor art to shame,—

How shall I answer,—you whose heart of love
Finds room for me, so spacious is its realm,
Must teach me utterance as gracious too—
In words or music? And if aught above
These two there be that can the heart o'erwhelm
It is in silence—which now speaks to you.

XXXI. IF, WHEN APRIL COMES

Pity me not if I should fall from grace
While yet the world is glamour to the senses,
Or that I forego worship for a face
That shatters utterly the old defences.
Pity me not if I should cast away
The gifts I labored all my life to gather;
Though you should think it heartless to betray,
Would you not I were true to beauty rather?

Pity me only if, when April comes,
I do not quiver to an ecstasy
Of unendurable anguish to be free.
Pity me only if the shining domes
And windows of delight from beauty stay me—
Then you may come and pitilessly slay me!

XXXII. I AM SO GREAT A LOVER

I am so great a lover I can win
Eternity of joyance at the way
Clouds mass themselves upon a summer's day
Athwart the hour when twilight closes in.
And I can hearken, mid the city's din,
To lonely bird-calls shed above the play
Of waters in some Tempé far away;
And at a note, hear symphonies within.

Therefore to speak, O beautiful and wise,
It were not needful. Nay, I could make thrift
If you abide but, token in your eyes
Of some far-promised favour, some least gift.
Such worship may endure where passion dies
Adown the heart, as petals blown adrift.

XXXIII. NOT NARROWLY

I would be chosen not because I stood
Alone in your desire and eagerness
(With no one else as ardent to possess
Your body and soul, and all the kindred good
That you are part of) but because I could
Outrank the others when there was no dearth
Of worthier than I to prove my worth.
Nor would I win you narrowly, as would

Assailers of their rivals. Only when
Your tests with privilege, your feasts with pride,
Your hopes in wealth, your faith in the allied
False values of the world have failed you—then
Would I be proud to go to you as yours,
Knowing that you had tried (and closed) all doors.

XXXIV. OUT OF MY BODY'S CARNIVAL

Out of my body's carnival, no dream
Has come aflame, no brandfire toward a goal.
I have allowed the flesh to ride supreme
Over the fortalices of my soul.
I said: I would not suffer, would not live
The cycle of the senses. I would fly
The dim haunts of my body, fugitive
From the world's glamour and the hot blood's cry.

Came then the battle. Naked to the bone
I sank in the arena of desire,
Doomed utterly, because the flesh is fire
And all the barricades were overthrown.
Now in the alien night my cry is heard
Only by ghosts who do not speak a word.

XXXV. IN THE TIME OF FLOWERS

Oh to be lovely in the time of flowers
When all the earth is bridal to the sun!
And to go golden, heedless of the hours,
Free to be captured, jubilant to be won!
Surely 'tis sweet upon a summer's day
To be with all things blooming in accord.
Oh to go lovely in the month of May;
To be adorable! To be adored!

Love is not lovelier than when the heart
Stirs with the bluet's first awakening
To the tenderest tip-toeing in of spring.
And love from beauty may not keep apart
When once the iris whispers to the rose—
And the earliest rhododendron goes!

XXXVI. PRESAGE

Sometimes I wonder through what magic doors
The spirit enters on its heritage;
On what remote and ultimate dim shores
The mighty currents of each turbulent age
Come to a pause; and though I search the lores
Of ancient language and the mellowing page,
I stay unknowing; but at times there pours
Music around me in my pilgrimage.

So when my soul its passions would assuage
And I go pondering on that heart of yours
And find it hushed to depths I cannot gauge,
Guessing at what it kneels to and adores,
This music comes, and with it the presage
Of footfalls along heavenly corridors.

XXXVII. NON MIHI SOLUS

I who have trod the green roofs of the earth
Searching for beauty in a gleam of lights
Still of this world; who stood on blinding heights
But looked not higher, seeing in death and birth
The ultimate of life; who, at a dart
Of starshine through the void, could frame anew
Heavens beyond the farthest deeps of blue,
Yet strained earth only closer to the heart,—

Weary, at last, pursuing my desire,
I thought to turn me from each worldly goal,
And with the assuaging of my thirst entire
To ask of Thee anointment for my soul.
But when I came and looked into Thy face
I read therein salvation for the race.

XXXVIII. TO SAY "I LOVE YOU"

To say "I love you,"—oh, that would be vain
Unless you swore it also! Nay, then still
I'd want the words resaid, resworn, until
All other words were driven from my brain
And these alone, made consecrate, remain.
But oh, my faith's so pitiably ill
With wasting doubts, I know not now what will
Make me believe in spoken words again.

Yet swear this once, and I shall then forbear
To ask new confirmation of your vow.
But what of the many that love and call you fair,
The alien lips that hunger for your brow?
Say then "I love you," ever and anew,
And do not cease, though I should ask you to!

XXXIX. L'ETERNELLE DOULEUR
(Paul Darde's "Femme aux Serpents")

In what vast dream was born that agony
Set living on thy face of classic mold?
Whose brain wrought here a whole eternity
Of stoic suffering? What gift of old
Waked in the slow surrender of the eyes,
Those vital lips so pale, that mouth of moan?
And oh, the struggle there which lives and dies!
Was it the hand of Darde's or thine own

Drew back the head, imprisoned thus, and chose
The tortuous windings of each venomed snake?
O emblem thou of our enduring woes!
Say, can there be an end? Will time yet break
This bondage of the soul, or is hope vain
After these countless centuries of pain?

XL. SUCCUBA

How can you yield your hand to common touch
When I set worship on each finger-tip?
Yet must I love you—love you overmuch,
Though each abasement sting me like a whip.
This was my failing, that I raised too high
An altar for your pride to walk upon.
You would go earthly, heedless of the sky,—
And I would drag you to Hyperion.

Oh I had much to give beside the flesh!
Much of an unused wonder and emprise;
Now I lie strengthless in a golden mesh
(The stark, unbattled glamour of your eyes)
Wherein my gods are lost as in a gloom
And there is no escape, except in doom.

XLI. DAILY MIRACLE

Though there are miracles in time and space
More eloquent of immortality
Than these your hands in their devout embrace,
Than these your eyes in their blue clarity,
Yet, when the assuaging beauty of your face
Falls murmuring on my soul like summer rain
Stilling within the precincts of your grace
The pulse and fever of the world-old pain,

Then, howsoever in the outerness
A spirit immanent beyond the seas
Sheds ceaseless glory through the Infinite,
I hail in you a miracle no less
Than all the marvel of the Pleiades,
And all the chroniclings of Holy Writ!

XLII. THERE COMES A TIME

There comes a time when all things fall from us
Like shrouds about a body long decayed.
We hear earth's challenge, but are undismayed,
And beauty is no longer perilous!
Meanings and names and values that we gave
Despotically to the world, sure of our power,
Perish from it in the appraising hour.
And whether we are emperor or slave,

Sinner or sainted, idiot or inspired,
It does not matter once the glamour dies
Out of our failing hearts, out of our eyes.
Nothing remains of all that was desired;
And we are dead before the body goes
Back to the night of the primordial snows.

XLIII. EXPOSTULATION

I once stood knocking at your door of dreams,
And no one opened. I was loath to go,
Fain to believe you would not have it so.
Obscure I was and lonely as the streams
On mountain fastnesses. Only the beams
Of stars haunted me then; and through the snow
Of winters, with the sleet and drifting floe,
My heart burned constant in celestial gleams.

And then once more I came, and you stood bright
Upon the entrance, holding wide the door.
I was not overproud; and yet I might
Never again set foot where once before
Admittance was denied me in my plight.
One may forget—but what's remembrance for?

XLIV. NEVER LESS PITIFUL

Now you have slain me with too bright a sword,
Too deft a stroke, too perfect an intent,
And I am dying, desolate and forspent,
While still you are my beautiful adored!
Yet think not ever I would falter back
To ask forgiveness for the blood you spilt.
Plunge, succuba, plunge deeper, to the hilt!
Let me at least die proud, though my heart crack.

You have no pity, and I shall not sue.
Only when I have died from too much grief,
You'll know I loved you, better than belief,
Past all your valuations, false and true.
And never will you seem less pitiful
Than now, my murderous and beautiful!

XLV. COVENANT

You shall be beautiful until the end
Even as you were faithful from the start.
You did not ask the forfeit of my heart
Because you loved me once, or were my friend;
Nor sought my pride to break, my will to bend
As others who have used me on the mart,
Winning their unearned triumphs through my art,—
Quick to forget me on the road they wend.

You shall be beautiful until the last,
For where my faith was wantonly betrayed,
You did not fail, though 'twere your dying breath.
So have I built my sanctuary fast
In you, who know how well my soul has made
Its covenant with truth, more strong than death.

XLVI. TIMES SQUARE

Oh I am young with wonder once again
As in the early days of my desire
When love stood tip-toe in my heart afire,
And aching in me was an old, old pain.
Now once again the banners are unfurled;
Beauty flows by me, lyric with allure;
And once again I hunger and am poor
While all around me booms the scarlet world.

But you are gone, my beautiful and true!
And I stand glamor-haunted on the street
Thirsting once more a fatal face to greet,
Another perilous phantom, strange and new,
That shall beguile me where the lights still loom
Into the eddies of life's passionate doom.

XLVII. IMMUNITY

I know a place where the autumnal quiet
Of Indian Summer falls at set of sun;
The city of a myriad lights flares by it,
And yet the uninvaded peace there won
Is never ravished. Though the throngs surge nigh it
With din of endless traffic overrun,
Secure it lies from the bewildering riot
Of passions flaming to oblivion.

So, when my soul with eminent precision
Pacing the dread streets of the thoroughfare,
Builds to the heights, beyond the crowds' derision,
It gains immunity. And howsoe'er
The blasts sound mighty, it is safe in vision
Amid the earthly swirl that plunges there.

XLVIII. SEA CALL

My soul would lift up anchor as a sail
Grown restive for the open, vermeil seas.
O come, O haste, thou quickening vital breeze,
Bewitch me ere my sudden courage fail.
Langorous are the days, becalmed the hours.
My senses sleep, as though within a tomb
Where only night-shade grows and ganja-bloom.
Unfold, O sails, as the impregnate flowers.

The wide sea haunts me to its naked breast
As anchored ships are haunted from their quays.
The wide sea haunts me without leave or rest
From Boreal zones to the Antipodes,
Till I lie white and strangled on the crest
Or deep-drowned in the briny mysteries.

XLIX. FINALITY

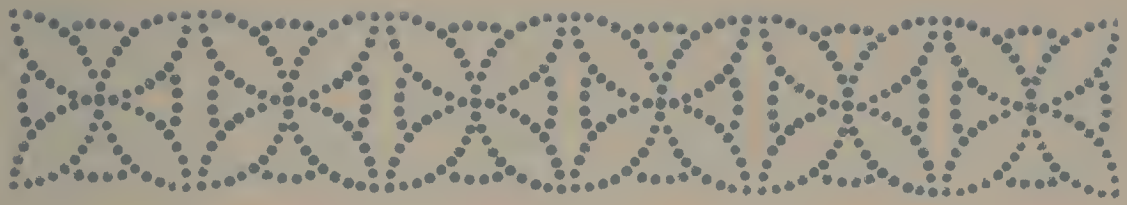
When I think back upon those golden hours
We two indued with all the prophecies
Of sacred love, obedient to the powers
That shape our ends unto the sanctities;
And I remember visions which were ours
Alone to share, and the high faith in things
That opened up an archway through the flowers
Pulsating with innumerable wings—

I ask, O soul, darest thou now return
To the lesser deities? Canst forget
That ancient ardours still within thee burn
Continuous magic, like an amulet?
Or will thy final footsteps lightly turn
To some new doom upon the parapet?

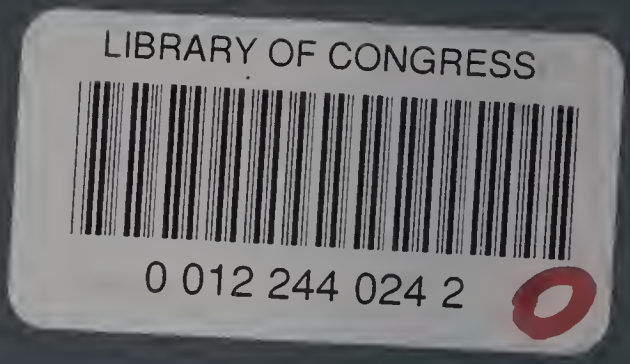
L. UNKNOWN SHORE

Darkling we stand upon the Unknown Shore
Of worlds unguessed at. Our poor feet have strayed,
Not knowing, over paths still unessayed,
And hosts invisible cry us to the fore.
Earth's barriers are fallen, and the light
Streams in upon us from the Upper Field
Myriad with souls whose lips for ages sealed
Now flash their signals wide across our night.

Nothing has perished. The earliest lark
That thrilled the silence of the world's first spring,
Still carols somewhere on the bough or wing.
There is no death: daybreak is of the dark;
The glow of vanished star-streams and old skies
Still shines immortally from out our eyes.



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